

University of Wisconsin- Whitewater  
Whitewater, Wisconsin  
Graduate School

## The Popularity and Purpose of Guided Reading

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements of the  
Master of Science in Education – Professional Development

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July 25, 2012

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## Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my husband, Jonathan, for supporting my need to succeed. Thank you for pushing me along when the support was needed most. Also, thank you for occupying yourself during countless hours, while I worked on this project.

I also would like to thank the many professors who have helped me achieve this project from beginning to end. Those include the following: Dr. Andrea Maxworthy-O'Brien for tending to my many questions, and helping me navigate my way through the beginning of my research; Dr. Liesl Hohenshell, for helping me smooth out the dents of this project; Dr. Kathryn Brimmer for teaching me that reading is the most interesting and important subject in my undergraduate program, which carried me through this graduate project; and thank you, Dr. Ann Curry Ruff for supporting this project with your expertise in revisions, edits, and subject area.

Thank you to my teaching colleagues for your participation in my research. Although it was my first year in the district, the encouragement and interest in my work that I received all year long was appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank my mom and dad for listening to my frustrations from the beginning of this process until the end, especially within the final weeks. Your lending ears and comforting words were always a point of encouragement.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine what makes guided reading a popular reading approach based on research, and determine its use in my current school district. The method used was a survey of nine items authored by the researcher. These items were based on reviewed research and personal experiences. A paper survey was submitted through teacher mailboxes. The subjects included 25 elementary teachers from a rural district in southeastern Wisconsin. The district consisted of one elementary, one middle, and one high school. It was concluded that of the 14 out of 25 who responded, all the teachers used guided reading. Overall, teachers are positive about guided reading and on average have a moderate strength of knowledge of this approach. Their knowledge of guided reading was mostly acquired through people, such as the reading teacher. The average years of experience teachers have used guided reading was about 3 years, and most teachers conduct guided reading in small groups everyday. Teachers indicate that guided reading is effective and good for kids, but takes a lot of time to plan. Also, teachers reported that not all students are on task while guided reading is being instructed. Recommendations for future research, administrators of the district, and teachers are provided.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Teachers are always told to use research-based practices when teaching their students. Whether the level is kindergarten or high school, most teachers are in constant search of what works best for all kids and fits the curriculum. There are many practices to choose from, so what makes guided reading a contender? The following will explore the definition of guided reading, the wide uses of guided reading, its stretch of international popularity, and how I became curious enough to research its popularity in my own school. Reading is complex; as a teacher of beginning readers, I want to know that the approach I use is worth the planning and instructional time.

Guided reading is a reading approach that teachers can use to support the “reader’s development of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 2). With this approach, students meet with the teacher with a book. The book was chosen by the teacher and is at a certain challenge level. The teacher works with the students on one or two teaching points from the reading. For example, the teacher helps students examine the structure of sentences to decipher meaning. Guided reading involves ongoing observation and assessment. This assessment helps the teacher effectively choose texts that fit the instructional needs of the group.

Guided reading has a wide variety of uses because the students drive the teaching (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Marinaccio-Eckel, n.d; Stinnett, 2002). First, the teacher assigns groups based on assessments, like running records, to determine where students need more reading support. These groups meet to read new texts chosen by the teacher. Each student receives the same copy of the new book, including the teacher. The teacher gives an introduction to the text using familiar

vocabulary from the story, and may encourage a look at the pictures. Students are then told to read the new book the first time quietly to themselves or silently. As students are reading, the teacher closely monitors the students' reading behaviors. The teacher is able to "look for evidence of problem solving and intervene as needed" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 8). The teacher can respond quickly to the reader's needs by modeling correct strategies when there is a problem.

Students drive the instruction by demonstrating their problem areas while they are reading, and the teacher can quickly show the student a solution. "[The teacher's] observations help plan quickly what to teach after the first reading" p. 8). The student can then practice what the teacher modeled, which is supported and assessed on the spot. The teacher then determines if further support is needed. For example, if a certain strategy needs to be worked on again, the teacher can introduce an activity to practice the strategy for independence. If the student used the strategy correctly, then the teacher may choose to extend the reading with questions, take a running record, or send the student back to other literacy activities (Fountas & Pinnell). Subsequent running records determine if the group stays together, or re-assigning of groups is needed based on progress.

Guided reading can be conducted in a large group setting, small group setting, or one-to-one. It is useful for regular educators, special educators, and even English as a Second Language (ESL) educators (Avalos et al., 2007; Foorman & Torgerson, 2001; Massengill, 2004). Although it is used primarily in the classroom, it has also been used in tutoring situations and modified for intervention groups (Avalos et al., 2007; Foorman & Torgerson, 2001; Ford & Opitz, 2008; Massengill 2004).

According to research, guided reading is being used across the nation and in other



countries such as Lebanon and England (Chaaca & Ghosp, 2010; Fisher, 2008). However, I personally noticed a problem with inconsistent use from classroom to classroom. While I was teaching kindergarten in another district with more than one elementary school, my observations as a new teacher grew to a greater curiosity about guided reading. I was trying to get on the same page as the other kindergarten teachers in terms of implementing a reading approach. As I got to know the other teachers and discussions about this reading approach evolved, it became clear to me that everyone was doing something completely different in each of the classrooms. Some teachers were not well informed in the area of guided reading, and had different opinions of its use and effectiveness. They also differed in their classroom management style. I feel it is important to study teachers' perspectives of their guided reading implementation to know that students are receiving all the necessary pieces to form strong reading strategies, making literature meaningful, and building skills that are developmentally appropriate to successfully meet common core standards.

I had recently been student teaching and had used guided reading in that kindergarten classroom. Based on this experience and observing the success of the students, I knew I wanted to use it in my own classroom. As I continued to communicate my experience and success with guided reading to the other kindergarten teachers, it did not seem to catch on with them as quickly as I had hoped. Therefore, through my educational experiences and knowledge I questioned, "If they are not using guided reading, what are they using? Why are they using it instead of guided reading? What is the research behind guided reading's success to support my case for it?" This led to a review of literature and the development of the survey items found in Appendix A.

After reading and reviewing the research regarding guided reading (Chapter Two), I

wanted to determine if guided reading was being used in elementary classrooms within my current school district, which is located in southeastern Wisconsin. In the early spring of 2012, I developed a survey to determine the extent to which guided reading is used. I wanted to determine if teachers in this district learned the approach commonly so everyone is on the same page and has the support of the district. I also wanted to know if they knew how to conduct guided reading, and if they had support from the district.

Surveys show valuable comparisons and can be qualitative and/or quantitative depending on the type of questions offered. Surveys can offer insights and direction to further more specified research. My particular survey did just that for me and for many other researchers who were equally curious about guided reading use. The inquisition of reading strategies began long before this year's teachers were born, and continue through today.

In Chapter Two, I review the literature related to guided reading. In Chapter Three, I explain the essential points that led to the design of my survey. Chapter Four describes the results of the survey item by item. In Chapter Five, I provide changes needed to the survey for further research. Also, recommendations for administrators and teachers are provided based on my results and the research from Chapter Two.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Literature**

The loaded history of reading instruction has impacted today's education. In this review, the history of reading research is explored starting with the definition of basal instruction, the evolution of McGuffey Readers, the measurement movement, Sputnik's effect on instruction, research by Bond and Dykstra, and a look at Holistic instruction versus Phonics instruction. The theoretical framework is explained including information on the Interactive Model and Constructivist Theory. Next, the study of approaches and specific skills are dissected including the well-known first grade studies, phonics instruction, and comprehension. Finally, guided reading benefits are proven useful for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), struggling and at-risk students, and adults.

Literacy education has changed over the last century, especially within the last 20 to 30 years. The shift has gone from basal instruction to guided reading, which can be established as early as kindergarten. A basal reading program (comes from 'base') is a systematic core reading program. It follows a specific order of skills and teacher-guided lessons from the "readers" provided in the program (Lipson & Wixson, 2009, p. 193). "Many students with reading and writing problems read only what is in their basal anthology. Consequently, students only experience the genre, authors, and topics included in them" (Lipson & Wixson). There has also been a shift from whole-to-part instruction (learning words through repeated readings) to part-to-whole (using phonics, word patterns, and sight words) and back again often times referred to by teachers as a "pendulum shift" in reading instruction (DeVries, 2008, p. 8).

Today, guided reading has taken over as the latest trend in reading instruction. Guided reading is part of a balanced literacy program, which aligns with Rumelhart's Interactive Model (1994), the constructivist theory, and a multitude of research by Avalos et al. (2007), Bond and Dykstra (1967), Fisher (2008), Short et al. (2000) among others.

Guided reading is just one part of balanced literacy. Balanced literacy is separate multiple activities that cover several strategies of reading and writing. It includes read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, shared writing, interactive writing, writing workshop, independent writing, and letter and word study (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Guided reading is currently being used across the state, nation, and in other countries. It is a chosen reading practice due to the fact that teachers model to children how to read, and support them as they go depending on their reading needs and skills. In order to develop a more thorough understanding of balanced reading, more specifically guided reading, pertinent historical, theoretical, and research documents were reviewed and a synopsis of these documents are provided in this review of literature.

#### *The History of Reading Research in the United States.*

While there is a vast history of educational research, specifically reading research, the focus of this section of the review is to identify the historical shifts in reading research. These shifts include the introduction of meaning into materials, such as the "McGuffey readers" in 1837, the measurement movement in 1914 by Edward Thorndike, the launching of Sputnik in 1957, the whole language movement in 1972 led by Kenneth Goodman, and the recent movement in reading, guided reading, brought on by Fountas and Pinnell, which was directly influenced by Marie Clay's theories and work with Reading Recovery. Each of these shifts had an effect on reading education. They

inspired significant reading research in terms of the teachers teaching students how to read and how students learn to read.

*The evolution and influence of McGuffey Readers.* Reading materials, known as “spellers,” were most available and popular from the 1500s to the mid-1700s. These materials included tables, which were essentially “lists of words in an increasing number of syllables” for students to memorize, and included pronunciations of words (Monaghan & Barry, 1999, p. 12). The “lessons” included sentences and reading selections such as fables and a great deal of secular reading material. These were considered comprehensive texts and contained about 100 pages. Researchers, Monaghan and Barry, proclaimed that “spellers” were misnamed since “their instructional objective was to teach not only spelling, but reading, religion, and morality” (p.11). Unfortunately, the use of “pithy sentences unrelated to one another” are criticized today, which were not connected to the readings within the “spellers” (p.13).

Reading materials to follow “spellers” were labeled as “old readers” (Monaghan & Barry, 1999 p. 14). These were most popular from 1785 until the 1830s. These readers consisted of “essays written for adults and designed for children already reading” (p.15). Noah Webster compiled these readers, which included articles by Charles Dickens, Murray Lindley and his *English Reader*, and G. & C. Meriam’s *The Village Reader*. Although more works of literature were getting into the hands of adults and children, continued criticisms were brought about in 1826’s *American Journal of Education*, which brought up the question of meaningfulness in literature (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). The article in the *American Journal of Education* facilitated a change in the readers.

The question of meaningfulness in literature spiked a new style of readers by

McGuffey in 1837 (Monaghan & Barry, 1999 p. 17). McGuffey's second reader of 1837 was the first to include comprehension questions. In fact, the questions at the end of the selection asked for more than factual answers. Words within the story were placed at the end of the selection; whereas, larger editions put the words in the front of the selection in order to highlight words of importance. "Spellers" evolved by defining the words that needed to be spelled for better comprehension of reading (p. 19).

*The measurement movement.* Edward Thorndike was known for developing numerous measurement scales in many subject areas including scales for reading, handwriting, drawing, etc. Specifically, he focused on controlled vocabulary with the use of his reading scales published in 1914 (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). Reading scales included tests about understanding sentences and a visual vocabulary scale. The 'understanding of sentences' reading scale was a measurement of "simple oral reading of matter-of-fact passages" (Sears, n.d.b, p. 6) where students answered questions about what they've read. The number of questions students scored correctly were compared to a T-score, which then indicated where the student stood in terms of reading age. The possible interpretations included: very exceptionally inferior, exceptionally inferior, very inferior, inferior, low average, average, high average, superior, very superior, exceptionally superior, and very exceptionally superior (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012). He published vocabulary books for teachers to refer to when teaching, which lead to vocabulary books for elementary students. Publishers used such vocabulary books as frameworks in their early readers like the *Dick and Jane* series where controlled vocabulary occurred within the text, and Fairytales were no longer the popular material used to teach reading (p. 41).

Thorndike's work on vocabulary drew attention to silent reading in the 1920s, which facilitated the development of basals in the 1930s (Monaghan & Barry, 1999 p. 39). There was a spike in children's literature, which meant that literature was available for students to read at an actual child's reading and comprehension level (unlike Fairytales, which had too challenging of text for children to read independently). There was also increased availability in professional literature for teachers to reference when teaching reading. Thorndike proclaimed that teachers needed guidance in teaching reading, and students needed some guidance in using reading skills (Sears, n.d.b.). Thus, the measurement movement sprung into action with controlled testing, of which Thorndike was a firm believer (Sears, n.d. b.). New tests were printed, and classroom reading became standardized in order to control what and how teachers were teaching (Sears, n.d.b.). Thorndike proposed the idea of guiding teachers and students in reading skills. The idea of guiding students in reading skills can be found in guided reading's format. However, teachers were unable to shift materials and procedures as needed to directly fit student needs. This was due to the influence of the standardized classroom during the measurement movement and through decades after.

*Sputnik's effect.* In 1957, the Soviet satellite Sputnik was launched, which sent Americans into a panic (Sears, n.b.a.). This was the time of "social unrest" due to the uncertainty about the security of the nation (p.16). A dramatic movement in education would follow the events of Sputnik's launch.

After the launch, American education was under attack. There was criticism about the definition of a teacher, and a sudden flurry of research aimed to assess the ability of American students, which essentially led to more programmed materials (Sears, n.b.d.).

Reading education was taught at every level with the beginning of Title 1 services, Head Start programs, adult education classes, remedial classes of grammar, spelling, and reading in high school and college levels. Also, the role of reading specialists developed (Sears, n.d.b.). Researchers and teachers were free to innovate, experiment, and modify within classrooms (Sears). With more programmed materials which consisted of control over skills to be taught a certain way, the hope of producing faster and better reading results exerted a large influence on the reading field (Sears).

The flurry of research and development of programmed materials brought on a famous book published in 1955 *Why Johnny Can't Read and What You Can Do About It* by Rudolf Flesh (Sears, n.d.b., p. 22). This book caused another shift in reading research as the word method was harshly criticized, shifting reading education from whole-to-part (learning whole word through repeated exposure), to a part-to-whole movement (using phonics and patterns to read a word), which would later shift back in the late 1960s (p. 22).

*1960-1969.* Basals were beginning to diminish as even more programmed materials and standardized tests were formed. Also, informal assessments such as questioning-answer-relationships (QAR) and organizers, like story maps, were increasing in use (Lipson & Wixson, 2009; Sears, n.d.b.).

During this time period, the focus of reading research was designed by a study of first graders by Bond and Dykstra in 1967. Ultimately, they discovered that there was no instructional method “superior to others for students at either high or low levels of readiness” (Bond & Dykstra, 1967, p. 69), meaning there was no one reading program proven to have a greater effect over another when used with students at high readiness or



low readiness skills. These authors argued that “knowledge of letter names and the ability to discriminate between word sounds appear to have the greatest relationship to reading success under various reading methods” (p. 66). These findings shifted reading instruction towards the use of multiple methods (including phonics) to be much more effective. It also showed that students were able to learn under a non-basal reading method.

*Holistic instruction vs. Phonics instruction.* In 1972, Kenneth Goodman’s whole language movement sparked the “most significant movement in reading curricula in the last thirty years” because teachers were viewed as facilitators of information, not strictly tellers (Sears, n.d.b., p. 29). Whole language was based on the idea that learning to read should be like learning to speak. Since children learn to speak and understand words without paying attention to the individual sounds they are saying, their reading development should be parallel. Children should learn to read and understand whole words at a time instead of individual sounds. The whole language belief had teachers “observing what students did, decide what they needed, and arranged conditions to allow students to discover insights about reading, writing, and learning for themselves” (p. 29). Goodman’s work with miscue analysis led to the whole language movement by discovering that children could recognize words and make meaning of them based on four cueing systems:

- Graphophonic-the shapes of the letters we see, and the sounds that they evoke (sometimes referred to as sensory)
- Semantic-what word you would expect to occur based on the meaning of the sentence so far

- Syntactic-what part of speech or word would make sense based on the grammar of the language [and]
- Pragmatic-the function of the text (Wood, 2002, p. 10).

The findings of Bond and Dykstra, in addition to Goodman's whole language movement, inspired Marie Clay's development of Reading Recovery in 1984. This method was an intense approach to teaching reading to students who struggled with reading after one year of formal instruction. Marie Clay's Reading Recovery approach influenced the development of the guided reading approach (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Short et al., 2000).

Fountas and Pinnell were Reading Recovery teachers who "could not find a focused professional book that offered practical advice and discussions of research-based practice" in the area of matching books to readers, and providing differentiated instruction through working with small groups in reading (Heinemann, 2012, p. 1). With all of their training and experience with Marie Clay's Reading Recovery (1984), they teamed up to develop guided reading (Heinemann).

Much of Clay's work in Reading Recovery is a large influence on Fountas and Pinnell's book, *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children* (1996). Fountas and Pinnell state, "our view of guided reading is based on Clay's theory of reading continuous text" (p. 163). Specifically, they used Clay's *Gradient of Teacher Involvement* when writing information about the importance of introducing a book. They stated, "drawing from Clay, we have compiled a list of actions teachers take during book introductions" (p. 136). Fountas and Pinnell further explain from Clay that, "the process leaves room for child input to inform the teacher and for the teacher to make some

deliberate teacher moves” (p. 137).

Clay’s work also can also be found heavily in Fountas and Pinnell’s (1996) chapter, “Teaching for Strategies” (p. 149). In this chapter, Fountas and Pinnell use Clay’s idea of a “network of unobservable in-the-head strategies” to emphasize that a teacher’s “moves must be focused and supportive, designed to bring forward examples that will help children learn ‘how to learn’ in reading” (p. 149). These strategies include the following: maintaining fluency, detecting and correcting and error, problem solving new words, and reading as comprehension.

Clay’s work also influenced Fountas and Pinnell’s lists, “Prompts to Support the Use of Processing Strategies”, which are prompts teachers can use to facilitate their students to “learn how to think about different sources of information when using an increasingly difficult text” (p. 160). In addition, Marie Clay’s *Observational Study* and running records, which are part of Reading Recovery, were suggested forms of “documenting children’s reading behavior” (p. 39). These assessments include “informative measurement instruments that when administered to individuals at systematically spaced intervals provide patterns of progress and also guide instruction” (p. 39).

Reading Recovery and guided reading have many similarities and differences. Both programs are taught with certified teachers and have been proven effective. Both programs use gradient leveled texts and word work materials. Also, Reading Recovery and guided reading incorporate the reading of a new text at an instructional level. Also, the programs assess with running records. Word study strategies are taught in both programs, suggest 30-minute sessions, and ideally, groups meet every day (DeVries,

2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

While these programs have much in common, they do have differences. Reading Recovery's format follows a rigid guideline of activities done daily. A certified teacher specially trained in the Reading Recovery program must teach Reading Recovery. The student uses isolated word study and writes a sentence on a sentence strip, which is then cut up and taken home to put back together. Lessons are instructed outside of the classroom, taught one-to-one with first graders only, and lasts 15-22 weeks. If students do not show progress during the suggested time frame, they become a part of another ongoing tutoring program such as Title 1 (DeVries, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Guided reading contrasts from Reading Recovery in many ways because its format is more open. It is taught in the classroom with "small groups of 4-5 students per group, the younger the students, the smaller the group" (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2009, para. 3). Groups are arranged by reading level typically in classrooms from kindergarten to sixth grade. Instruction lasts the entire school year, but groups are re-assigned based on student progress. "The teacher observes the students as they read the text softly or silently to themselves" (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2009). These observations help the teacher determine one or two teaching points. Strategies are not limited to isolated word study, but can collaboratively work on word study strategies. In addition to word study, guided reading may include work with phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and writing. With guided reading, teachers are encouraged to use activities that extend the text (DeVries, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

In summary, from the 1800s to today, reading research has taken many avenues due to the development of new materials, criticisms, and instruction styles. While there

have been many approaches developed along the way, they have been based on the controversy of part-to-whole instruction or whole-to-part instruction. The major developments in the history of reading instruction led to the influence of guided reading. The research involved in each of the following produced a chain of influence from the early 1960s to today. Previous research in reading approaches influenced the first grade studies of Bond and Dykstra (1967). Bond and Dykstra then influenced the work of Ken Goodman and the whole language movement (1972). Together, these researchers influenced Marie Clay's development of Reading Recovery (1984). Then, Marie Clay influenced the development of guided reading by Fountas and Pinnell in 1996.

The first grade studies by Bond and Dykstra (1967) were influenced by research involving the following: the basal reading series, individualized methods, analytic and synthetic phonics, Language Experience Approach (LEA), linguist methods, and sex differences in reading. This study compared reading instruction in 27 different first grade centers for 140 days. The teacher administered pre and post-tests to the students as long as someone such as the principal observed the teacher. Data was also collected on the schools, community, and the teacher. Using data cards, results from pre and post-tests, and a computer program, Bond and Dykstra were able to compare the effectiveness of reading programs. These included relationships and correlations of the following: readiness and reading, the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.), basal plus phonics, language experience, and phonic/linguistic treatments.

Ken Goodman (1972) brought on the whole language movement with his work in creating a taxonomy of miscue (error) analysis. This taxonomy, "analyzed the degree to which miscues change, disrupt, or enhance meaning" when reading (DeVries, 2008, p.

56). Whole language teachers used Big Books and authentic text. They used shared reading with the Big Book, and with repeated readings the class discussed rhymes, word endings, vocabulary, and mechanics. Teachers planned stories to teach certain sounds and word families. Teachers taught phonics concepts children needed, while using books they enjoyed (Devries, 2008).

Bond and Dykstra (1967) and Ken Goodman (1972) influenced Reading Recovery by Marie Clay (1984 as cited in Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Reading Recovery uses gradient leveled texts, sentence strips, word work materials such as magnetic letters, and certified teachers with special training in Reading Recovery. Sessions are specifically for first graders that meet every day for 30 minutes. Reading Recovery teachers teach the first grader one-to-one outside of the classroom for 15 to 22 weeks. Clay's Reading Recovery program was proven effective, but considered expensive due to the special training. Reading Recovery is still used today, but popularity may be lessening due to a new reading approach based on its theory, without the added expense of specialized teaching.

Fountas and Pinnell developed the guided reading approach in 1996, which was heavily influenced by Marie Clay's work with Reading Recovery. Guided reading uses gradient leveled texts and word work materials. Students meet in small groups for 20 to 30 minutes, 2-5 times per week depending on the classroom schedule. Groups are assembled according to reading level, but re-grouped as progress is made. Various reading strategies are worked on during and after books are read with teacher support. The goal is for teachers to scaffold reading support through modeling of different strategies until readers achieve independence in reading.

Theoretical frameworks formed considering both sides of the controversy. The frameworks have indicated that reading is an interactive process using both graphophonic information, as well as semantic information.

### *Theoretical Framework*

In this section, two components of the theoretical framework for reading instruction are described. First, the Interactive Model, by Rumelhart, that there are multiple knowledges used to form information. Second, the constructivist theory described by Cambourne is explained. Cambourne continues to write about five principles reflected from teachers who follow and support a constructivist theory.

*An Interactive Model.* Rumelhart's Interactive Model of reading, developed in 1994, is based on the idea that reading is "a perceptual and a cognitive process" (Rumelhart, p. 1149). A skilled reader must be able to "make use of sensory, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information, and these sources interact in many ways during the process of reading" (p. 1149). Other models are based on independent parallel processes that do not interact, which Rumelhart disagreed with. Therefore, he proposed an Interactive framework that supported his belief that knowledge bases interact to facilitate the interpretation of information.

The different knowledges in the Interactive Model are described by Rumelhart as:

- Visual information store, which is the way information is initially sensed
- Featural, features are extracted according to assumptions
- Letter-level, scans and matches closest letter known
- Letter-cluster, looks for letter sequences likely to form units
- Lexical-level, scans and matches letter clusters or sequences to form words

- Syntactic, lexiles are scanned and looks for phrase possibilities [and]
- Semantic-level, evaluates the plausibility of the hypothesis and generates a representation (1994, p. 1172).

In general, the Interactive Model is based on the idea that knowledge bases work together. One can occur before the other. There is no specific order to complete a final interpretation/representation of information. It is not like an assembly line of information where one knowledge must occur before another, such as the 1972 Gough Reading Model and the 1974 LaBerge-Samuels Model (Rumelhart, 1994). Finally, knowledges can be revisited at any point during the processing of information. Essentially, all of the “various sources of knowledge, both sensory and nonsensory” (i.e. information about the probability of various strings of characters) come together at one place, and “the reading process is the product of the simultaneous joint application of all the knowledge sources” (Rumelhart, 1994, p. 1163).

The Interactive Model is based on the use of multiple perspectives. This model supports the guided reading model because multiple strategies are used at one time to teach reading. This includes featural knowledge, phonics, chunking, phrasing, sight words, and comprehension. All of these components are taught and revisited simultaneously as needed, not in a parallel, non-convergent order. Also, no single component needs to occur before the other. All strategies, like knowledges (syntactical, semantic, lexical, and orthographic), can be revisited based on the final outcome of information very much like the Interactive Model.

*Constructivist Theory.* Cambourne (2002) defined constructivism as “a set of assumptions about learners and the learning process” (p. 26). The three propositions of



constructivism express that “what is learned cannot be separated from the context in which it is learned, the purposes that the learners bring to the learning situation are central to what is learned, and knowledge and meaning are socially constructed through processes of negotiation, evaluation, and transformation” (p. 26). The constructivist theory described by Cambourne, lays out the assumptions believed to be most important in a successful reading program. Cambourne stated that students learn differently; therefore, constructivists believe “engagement incorporates different learning behaviors” (2002, p. 27). In order to learn, there must be active participation from the student, demonstration (specifically about reading and how it should be used), immersion, and engagement.

For a student to engage in learning there must be a purpose to learn, which means teachers tell students why they are doing what they are doing. Also, the student must be capable to learn, meaning that the teaching approach and materials must be at an appropriate age-level and mental ability. A student’s engagement in learning also must be done with likeable people (teachers, peers, parents, etc.), and in a less tense atmosphere for the student. This decreases anxiety of the engagement such as a small group versus a large group (Cambourne, 2002). Constructivists also emphasize that meanings are socially constructed. Therefore, when learning is done in collaborative groups, learning is enriched, interwoven, and expands understandings.

Cambourne also reported that the constructivist theory has five principles. The first principle Cambourne suggests teachers, “create a classroom ethos/culture that supports and encourages deep engagement with multiple demonstrations of effective reading behavior” (p. 31). They should communicate expectations and create

opportunities for reflection on learning such as modeling, justifying, and journaling.

Second, Cambourne suggested to use activities and strategies, “that are a judicious mix of the four dimensions of teaching and learning” (2002, p. 32). These included the following: explicit teaching, systematically planned teaching, mindful teaching, and contextualized teaching. Explicit teaching refers to bringing the knowledge and skills needed directly to the learner’s attention. Teachers can do this by demonstrating (modeling) the skill, and the student practices it. Demonstration and practice is needed instead of leaving it to learners to discover the skills they need themselves. Systematic planning refers to plans developed and thought out by the teacher documenting lessons, resources, and activities needed. Teachers need to be able to explain how their plans facilitated students’ learning. Mindful teaching is similar to metacognitive awareness, which is the “state of being consciously aware of what is going on” (p. 35). Therefore, mindful learning is knowing what is going on in a learning environment. This includes context, new information, and recognizing different points of view. Finally, contextualized teaching is teaching information to learners so that it makes sense to them (i.e. putting it in his/her perspective, using visual information to explain, giving relatable examples, etc.).

The third recommendation was to, “employ structures and processes that create continuous opportunities for the development of intellectual unrest” (Cambourne, 2002, p. 36). Intellectual unrest includes: puzzlement, cognitive conflict, and disequilibrium. Intellectual unrest can be done by transformation, discussion/reflection, application, and evaluation. Transformation is the ability to use or state a skill into one’s own interpretations and explanations without significantly changing the model.

Discussion/reflection refers to “oral communication with others and with oneself” whereas, both allow “exchange and interchange of meaning” (p. 36). Application is described as a “classroom structure” that creates collaboration between learners to apply the skills and understandings they have developed to authentic tasks, such as reading (p. 37). Application supports transformation, which leads to reflection, to further transformation, and so on. Evaluation is the learner’s response to a performance or task. This can be through a “discussion with other learners” or “those in a teacher role” (p. 37).

The fourth principle suggested teachers use strategies to, “develop each learner’s metatextual awareness of the processes and understandings implicit in effective reading behavior,” (Cambourne, 2002, p. 37). Metatextual awareness means students are consciously aware of and can articulate knowledge about text (ways it functions), processes (how they create meaning from the text), and strategies (options available or solving literacy-related problems they are expected to solve) (Cambourne, 2002). Metatextual awareness can be developed through discussion, reflection, talking, writing, and listening. Constructivist teachers create activities with the above skills to make students aware of the deeper meaning of a text. Meanings are manipulated across or within semiotic systems, so students have an understanding of how language works.

The final principle presented by Cambourne (2002) guides the teacher to, “design and use tasks that will coerce authentic use of processes and understandings implicit in effective reading behavior” (p. 38). The more students use literacy activities outside of the school that require behaviors a proficient adult would have (making lists at home, at grocery store, job training, etc.), the more authentic the literacy activity is. Therefore, to make the activity authentic, teachers need to be aware of the literacy uses possible

outside of the classroom. The activity needs to be modified to the level of the student. When students have an activity at their level, they can make a clear connection. This makes the learning more meaningful for the student and presents an opportunity to build upon.

The Interactive Model consists of knowledges. While-important, they are not in a specific order. They allow revisiting and building. The Constructivist Theory encompasses principles of learning, but they mostly need to be meaningful. Knowledges, coupled with making meaning work together to produce reading ability. All knowledges of the Interactive Model and principles of the Constructivist Theory can be built upon with the right instruction and applications. Overall, both the Constructivist Theory and Interactive Model emphasize that understandings can be made when instruction is authentic and meaningful. These understandings lead to the achievement of a higher reading level.

#### *The Study of Approaches and Specific Skill Areas*

Stemming from the Interactive Model and constructivist theory, Bond and Dykstra (1967) conducted a famous study, which agreed with Rumelhart (1994) that processing is not parallel. In addition, the debate of phonics instruction versus whole word instruction took form, which influenced the debate of basal materials versus non-basal materials. Cunningham and Cunningham (2002) also conducted studies emphasizing the constructivist theory that engagement is imperative for learning to take place. Comprehension strategies and routines are outlined, as well as Goodman's information regarding meaning cues, which further contribute to the important knowledge pieces that are a part of the reading process. These studies set the foundation

for the explanation of the guided reading approach, which is popular today.

*First grade studies.* Rumelhart's Interactive Model is supported by Bond and Dykstra's (1967) findings of 27 comparative studies of first grade reading. They discovered that many attributes are brought to the learning situation such as auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, familiarity with print, and intelligence. Ultimately, no approach, basal or non-basal, was found to be uniquely effective for those of high achieving readers. No one single approach was best. Ideally, they found that a method where multiple approaches are addressed was best, which was in line with the interactive approach, identified years later, stating that processing is not parallel; there is no "one way" to process information. Knowledges work off one another just as approaches work off of one another to produce the best outcome.

At the end of the first grade studies, Bond and Dykstra (1967, p. 65) concluded the following:

- Basal plus phonics is superior in reading over basal, but there was no difference in rate or accuracy
- Language Experience Approach (LEA) was favored slightly over basal
- Linguistic approach faired better for word recognition, but basal faired better at speed and accuracy of reading [and]
- Phonic/Linguistic approach was superior over basal in word recognition, word meaning, spelling, and word study skills.

Bond and Dykstra (1967) concluded that combinations of basal and supplementary programs were superior to single approaches. They suggested that Phonic/Linguistic approach and LEA would be most superior together stating, "perhaps

an instructional program which incorporated the most important elements of all approaches is more effective” (Bond & Dykstra, 1967, p. 68). Based on the suggested approaches by Bond and Dykstra, it can be determined that these “most important elements” are phonics and comprehension, which are components of a guided reading program.

*Phonics instruction.* Regardless of how people have thought about phonics instruction, research shows phonics is an important part of reading instruction. Bond and Dykstra (1967), supported by Rumelhart (1994), and the National Reading Panel (Ehri, Correro, Shanahan, Willos, & Yatvin, 2000), have indicated that phonics is important. In 1934, Paul McKee wrote “phonics is imperative,” (p. 87 as cited in Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002) and now that we know how the brain works, how children learn, and how words are structured, it is once again imperative. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) also believe that it is important to teach phonics during guided reading stating:

Letters and words within continuous text offer different kinds of informational support than they do when isolated. The syntactic patterns of the language narrow the possibilities and make it easier for children to select and use the graphic symbols (p.163). The relationship between the phonological aspects of language (the sounds) and the graphic signs (the letters and combinations of letters) is an important source of information for readers (p. 164).

Phonics can bridge the gap between cognitive clarity and cognitive confusion, two terms coined by John Downing in 1979 (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002, p. 88). This supports Cunningham and Cunningham’s words that “children need cognitive clarity about what they are learning” (p. 88). Children need to know what they are trying to do,

understand where they are trying to go, and why to achieve cognitive clarity. When phonics is part of their education, children know what letters and sounds they are using, and know how to put them together to form words and read.

Cunningham and Cunningham (2002) stated, “children need to become engaged with what they are learning,” which aligns with the constructivist theory (p. 89). “Engagement is the relationship between motivation and learning” (p. 89). There are three components to motivation, which are, “self-confidence, beliefs about why you succeed or fail, and seeing the activity as pleasurable” (p. 89). In other words, when students have an approach that works, for example, the ability to decode phonetically, they can improve upon that approach and build self-confidence. However, if they do not have phonetic knowledge, they are lacking a skill that could substantially bolster their self-confidence and thus the feeling of success. When students are successful “they are motivated learners” (p. 90).

Cunningham and Cunningham (2002) emphasized the belief that students have different knowledge and strengths. Therefore, “children need multi-faceted, multi-level instruction” (p. 91). With the use of guided reading, students’ needs are addressed in collaborative groups of students. Cunningham and Cunningham continued to note that, “any kind of well-organized phonics instruction is better than little or none” (p. 91). While they stated that there is no superiority from one program to another, the National Reading Panel (NRP) took a closer look at phonics programs.

Ehri et al. (2000), in the National Reading Panel (NRP) report, examined some phonics programs. While they agreed with Cunningham and Cunningham that “explicit and systematic phonics programs are superior to an unsystematic or no phonics

program,” they also determined that “systematic phonics instruction produces the biggest impact on growth in reading when in kindergarten and first grade” (p. 45). The major phonics programs they examined were Jolly Phonics, Modified Reading Recovery, and Big Books. Ehri et al. found that Jolly Phonics was “systematic, meaningful, and engaging” (p. 35). Jolly Phonics reached auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners, which led directly to authentic reading and writing. The Big Books program was found to be imaginative and included fun activities, but was not systematic or did not have a special system for remembering. Modified Reading Recovery was quick, explicit, systematic, and the participants outperformed the control group. It also took fewer sessions for students to achieve phonic goals when compared to regular Reading Recovery.

Ehri et al. (2000) also noted that phonics instruction was appropriate at various levels. For example, they found that phonics instruction taught in kindergarten was effective in boosting students’ progress in learning to read and write words. Although some phonics programs may not produce the best results, it is necessary to note that research done on small and national levels has shown that a systematic, engaging phonics program is better than little or none at all. However, the question remains how phonics should be taught. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) state:

Phonological awareness, letter recognition, spelling patterns, letter-sound relationships, and words that do not have predictable letter-sound relationships are taught in guided reading lessons (p. 165). To read for meaning they [students] must be able to decode words strung together in sentences, paragraphs, stories, and informational texts (p. 164).

Teachers call attention to these skills during guided reading using text that “provides



ample opportunity to examine and analyze words. Teachers select particularly useful examples to explicitly teach for word-solving strategies following the reading” (p. 165).

Cunningham and Cunningham (2002) highlighted five important aspects of teaching phonics. First, “young readers need phonemic awareness” (p. 92). Phonemic awareness is one’s “realization that words are made up of sounds” (p. 92). Phonemic awareness can be taught through rhyming, removing and manipulating sounds, nursery rhymes, and Dr. Seuss. Phonemic awareness is “one of the best predictors of success in learning to read,” but children also need print-tracking skills, letter names, letter sounds, and cognitive clarity (p. 92).

Second, “children need to learn sequential decoding, but not necessarily through synthetic phonics instruction” (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002, p. 93). In order to become fluent readers, beginning readers should learn sequential decoding, which is the ability to associate sounds with letters when looking at the letters of an unknown word. Students can further grow their sequential decoding skills by practicing them. Consonant planes are also useful, which means using consonant sounds to decode unknown words in a sentence that could make sense when also using picture clues. Then, students learn the common sounds for vowel patterns, which is referred to as synthetic phonics approach (i.e. Dan ran. Ann ran. Dad and Ann ran) to become fluent readers (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002).

The third aspect states, “children need to apply phonics but do not need to be restricted to highly decodable text” (p. 94). Students should practice word identification clues such as sight words, decoding, and meaning-cues. Teachers need to provide texts with such multiple criteria to beginning readers on a regular basis, so that they “learn to

use all the word identification cues fluent readers actually use” (p. 94).

Fourth, Cunningham and Cunningham explained, “as children learn more words, they use patterns, and analogy to decode” (p. 94). Students use patterns and analogies as their decoding strategy by the time they reach a fluent first grade level. This is preferred over a letter-by-letter decoding skill. For example, when readers decode words, they can use patterns they sound out and recognize, like *gr*, to read words such as *grew*, *grass*, *grate*, etc. Using analogy means to have the ability to decode other words using the known pattern and ability to combine patterns to read a new word, like using *e-w* to make or read *new* or *chew* (p. 95).

Fifth, “children [need to] decode multisyllable words using patterns that are often morphemes” (p. 95). Morphemes are defined as “the smallest units of meaning into which a word can be divided” (i.e. *dog* is a morpheme, and the *s* in *dogs* is also a morpheme) (Graves, Juel, Graves, 2007, p. 130). Readers use root words and context in the sentence to confirm a pronunciation and construct meaning when decoding multisyllabic words. These skills establish vocabulary. Those who read many different types of texts have more practice decoding multisyllabic words within a variety of contexts. This is important because, “wide reading is the most significant predictor of vocabulary size” (p. 96).

Phonics helps students read and write with invented spelling. When phonics is taught, students have a greater opportunity to learn through their own invented spellings. Invented spelling was found especially helpful for first graders with low readiness at the beginning of the year (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002, p. 97). Therefore, phonics instruction should be taught through a variety of multi-level activities to help students

achieve cognitive clarity and become engaged in what they are learning. This is similar to what teachers do when using other reading approaches (i.e. guided reading, self-selected reading, and writing instruction). Phonics instruction should not take more than one-fourth of the language arts time, but should emphasize the transfer of skills for reading and writing.

Suggestions for student activities include “Making Words,” where students must look for patterns in words, sort words according to pattern, and decode rhyming words (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002, p. 98). Another activity suggested was, “Use Words You Know,” which encourages students to sort words by pattern, create more with that pattern, and put words together to make longer words (p. 101). A final suggested activity by Cunningham & Cunningham is called, “Reading/Writing Rhymes” (p. 103). In this activity, students identify a rhyming word with a pre-determined pattern. Then, the rhyming words are used in a silly sentence.

Cunningham and Cunningham stressed that children should spend reading and language arts time reading and writing. They are then able to spend their time applying the phonics skills they know. These authors suggested a “Four Blocks” plan, which includes 30-40 minutes of each per day: guided reading, self-selected reading/read aloud, writing, and word work (p. 96). In a “Four Blocks plan,” a guided reading group meets for the first block of time of 30-40 minutes (Graves et al., 2007, p. 257). During the second set of 30-40 minutes, students read material of their own choosing (typically using information from a reading workshop from earlier in the day). Students then work on a writing activity for the next block of 30-40 minutes, which is “conducted like a writer’s workshop” (p. 258). The fourth block of 30-40 minutes involves the teacher “helping the

students learn to read and spell high-frequency words, and learn visual and sound patterns of words” (p. 258).

When teachers teach a systematic phonics program, students’ reading skills are boosted (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002, p. 97). Students encouraged to read and write under the observation of a teacher are able to practice their skills and become more fluent readers (p. 97). Guided reading is a group method that incorporates phonics, word work, reading, and writing under the direction of a teacher. All activities and approaches can be used as needed in any order. Therefore, it is yet again supported by the Interactive Model, constructivist theory, the integration of phonics instruction, and as indicated below the comprehension process.

*Comprehension.* Duke and Pearson (2002) stated, “the process of reading comprehension has been grounded in studies of good readers” (p. 205). Through their review of reading comprehension research, Duke and Pearson found that good readers are active readers, evaluate the text, use pre-reading skills, make predictions, and are selective about material. Also, good readers can construct, revise, and question meaning. They have a large vocabulary, inquire author meaning, and read a wide variety of materials. Teaching “collections” or “packages” of comprehension strategies can “help students become truly solid comprehenders of many kinds of text” (p. 207). To accomplish this, Duke and Pearson suggested teachers use balanced comprehension instruction.

Balanced comprehension instruction includes “explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies, as well as a great deal of time reading, writing, and discussing text” (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 207). Specific, research-based comprehension strategies

include the following: predictions, think-alouds, visual representations (graphic organizers), five rules of summarization, question-answer-relationships (QARs), and vocabulary. Duke and Pearson argue that, “comprehension instruction is best when focus is on a few well-taught, well-learned strategies” (p. 236). It is recommended that one strategy be taught every ten weeks.

Along with specific comprehension strategies, effective comprehension routines were suggested (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 224). These include the following:

- Reciprocal teaching- a student predicts, questions, clarifies, and summarizes text
- Transactional/SAIL (Students Achieving Independent Learning)-uses prediction, visualization, questioning, clarifying, and associating text [and]
- Questioning the Author (QtA)- asks about the author’s message.

Duke and Pearson (2002) also reported that research indicated choosing well-suited texts, such as newspapers, books, chapters, and articles to match the strategies and routines support authentic learning and student motivation. In addition, comprehension instruction routines should encourage a gradual release of responsibility. As students take on more responsibility for a task, the teacher assumes less, which results in a more effective comprehension instruction program.

An ideal model for comprehension instruction includes the gradual release of responsibility, which can be taught during guided reading lessons. Gradual release of responsibility begins with the description of when and how a strategy should be used. The model includes the collaboration of strategies, independent practice, and silent

reading (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Through guided reading, the teacher is able to model these strategies. Students practice strategies independently or in a guided reading group. Strategies and tasks can easily be adapted to the child's ability and motivation while working toward a gradual release of responsibility.

The results of Bond and Dykstra along with related research on the pertinent skill areas of phonics and comprehension, relate to the implementation of the guided reading approach (see Bond and Dykstra, 1967). In addition, the theoretical frameworks associated with the Interactive Model and constructivist theory support guided reading. This method is systematically planned, authentic, includes metatextual awareness, engagement, modeling, demonstration, and justifying. Guided reading is a complete and effective method for readers of all ages and abilities.

### *Guided Reading*

In the guided reading approach by Fountas and Pinnell (1996), children are grouped together. The younger the group, the fewer members in the group. They are typically grouped according to reading level. Students are also grouped according to skill need (such as cross-checking and comprehension), interest, or social abilities (i.e. behavior when working with peers). These groups meet with the teacher on a regular basis each week, typically 2-5 times per week depending on the students' grade level and schedule. Each member should have his or her own copy of the text. The group may reread a text that reviews skills taught in a previous session and to practice fluency. Then, the teacher introduces a new text at that group's ability, need, or interest. The following describes the teacher's role after the new text has been introduced:

The teacher observes the students as they read the text softly or silently to

themselves. The teacher provides guidance and coaching to individuals based on her/his observations by providing prompts, asking questions, and encouraging attempts at reading strategy application (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2009, para. 3).

One or two teaching points, such as sight words, chunking, punctuation, text-to-self connections, and comprehension are practiced. Most of the time, an extended activity relating to the text or teaching point, such as a written response, is included. With guided reading, students are able to read new texts often with the support of their teacher and peers, improve and practice reading strategies and teaching points as they progress to independent reading, and make a connection with the text to make the idea “stick” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). While students are meeting in guided reading groups, other students are engaged in literacy activities, sometimes referred to as “kid stations” or “centers.” These may include, but are not limited to:

- Listening stations-listening to an audio book
- Rainbow spelling- writing spelling or sight words with color of the rainbow
- Literacy games-scrabble, making silly sentences, Boggle, rhyme matches
- Making words-use pocket charts or magnetic letters to assemble new words [and]
- Journal writing- practice writing stories, sentences, letters, or poems

(Saskatoon Public Schools, 2009)

The purpose of guided reading is to enable children to practice and use various reading strategies independently. Teachers can enhance comprehension and fluency through practice and support by having students read with other adults such as the

teacher, parent volunteer, or classroom assistant. Students may also be paired with an older reader. Students reach their guided reading goals by continually using their strategies independently throughout the rest of their education. Strategies are initially introduced in kindergarten.

The main categories a guided reading lesson includes are meaning cues, structure or syntax, and visual information (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Meaning cues help students “make sense” of the reading. Comprehension skills (such as being able to determine if the picture matches the words, or make a connection) are meaning cues. Structure or syntax means, “knowing and using the language rules” which relates to phonics because onsets, rimes, pre-fixes, and suffixes have meaning (p. 5). Visual information means knowing the “relationship between oral language and graphic symbols,” which again relates to phonics and phonemic awareness by knowing the symbol name and its sound (p. 5). These skills are represented by the knowledges from the Interactive Model. They can be learned and connected with one another, but do not need to be learned in a certain order.

During guided reading, the teacher teaches within the three categories with various texts. Students try out strategies and use them with confidence as texts become more difficult and varied in content. When these categories are attained, student’s use of independent comprehension and fluency, guided reading’s goals are met.

Based on the guided reading approach, Fountas and Pinnell have created sets of leveled books for reading assessment referred to as the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), and reading instruction kits, referred to as Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). They have also authored resource books for teachers to develop understanding of this approach. Guided reading has previously been labeled as a “best practice” in school



districts nation-wide (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001), and abroad in Canada, England and Wales (Fisher, 2008). Its popularity continues to grow as more resource books, websites, and workshops become available.

Research on guided reading is available and dates back to the middle 1990s. Today, researchers continue to conduct research to assess the effectiveness of the guided reading approach. While guided reading certainly is not the only reading approach available, it is considered a popular choice with research supporting it. Research has been conducted on numerous subjects in order to determine the success of the approach when the components are delivered effectively.

In this review, the subjects of focus are English Language Learners (ELLs), Special Education students and “at-risk” students, and adult struggling readers. The research was categorized by subjects in order to highlight the impact guided reading has on a variety of learners. With the rise of standards and frequency of standardized tests, ELLs are an important focus to districts. As ELL populations grow, the need to learn differently in order to sustain knowledge in the English language stands out when considering literacy methods. Teachers are commonly looking for research-based ideas to use to quickly and effectively increase reading skills for all students, but especially students in need of intervention, which may commonly include ELL students.

*Guided reading and ELLs.* Stinnett (2009) reviewed the research on two different reading instruction approaches with an ELL population. The first was a review of research with a broad perspective of general reading instruction focusing on ELL participation. The other was a review of research on guided reading instruction, modified for ELL students, which will be explored in more detail later. The first review about

general instruction compared sixth grade teachers with four ELL students. Although each teacher was well educated with many years experience teaching language arts, neither had professional development in working with ELLs.

Observations and data were collected by Yoon (2007 as cited in Stinnett 2009) in two classrooms. Interviews were conducted with the teachers and ELL students to determine teaching style and student outcomes. The teacher who had ELL students actively participate and were comfortable in their learning environment used small group instruction for reading. Through this small group instruction, learning was more applicable and meaningful for ELLs, which supports the constructivist theory of making meaning through social opportunities. Stinnett stated that the teacher who used large group instruction rarely included ELLs in the conversations. Students in this classroom showed passive behavior, unmet social needs, and lessened opportunities for connecting with the reading material.

The second section of the review described results found by Avalos, Plasencia, Chavez, and Rascon (2007). They examined the variables concerning second-language text structure, such as semantics, syntax, and morphology in a guided reading setting. In this study, the small group guided reading instruction was modified for longer sessions (30 minute sessions) and three to four times per week versus more typical 20-minute sessions two times a week. More opportunities for word work, phonemic awareness, and language opportunities were available compared to the regular guided reading approach. The authors found that when modified guided reading was used in elementary, middle, and high school in large, urban school districts for ELLs, reading gains of at least one to two grade levels were made. Furthermore, students in guided reading small-group

instruction learned more about English sounds and how these sounds relate to the letters.

Instructional reading grade levels were assessed using the Ekwall/Shanker Informal Reading Inventory, as well as the Burns/Roe Informal Reading Inventory for pretests and posttests. This study concluded that when teachers used guided reading with modifications for ELL students, reading gains were made. Seventh and eighth grade ELL students, in groups gained at least one grade level, while some gained as much as three grade levels in reading. Results were similar in a sixth and seventh grade study, where ELL students gained anywhere from one grade level to as many as four grade levels in reading. Using modified guided reading, teachers were able to monitor ELL progress, meet their needs to facilitate literacy and language learning, and enable students to self-extend their reading and language proficiencies by building on what they know in their first language.

Purdy (2008) conducted research suggesting four ways of structuring meaningful conversations with ELL students through questioning, vocabulary, collaborative talk, and culture recognition. Data and observations were collected from a grade three classroom in Canada where the ELL population was increasing. Two ELL students and three English only students were part of this study in a guided reading group. ELL students were encouraged to respond to open-ended questions, state the obvious of the text, and then asked to elaborate their answers. By being in a small group and meeting on a regular basis where text was the focus, observing how other children responded, thought, and participated in vocabulary activities, the ELL students were more comfortable to respond and mimic participation.

Marinaccio-Eckel (n.d.) investigated effective reading practice for ELL students

in a mainstream classroom, specifically comparing success with guided reading versus usage of basal materials. In her investigation, Marinaccio-Eckel noted it is important for ELLs to make meaningful connections with their text in order to develop their abilities, which was not possible with basal materials. However, with guided reading, the teacher was able to, “model literal, inferential, and critical questioning, as well as self-questioning to emphasize reading for meaning. Students became more interested and involved during guided reading lessons because they enjoyed sharing connections and what they’ve learned” (p. 2). In addition, strategies used during guided reading provided the opportunity for the ELL students to use maps to visually see text structure, create charts to organize information, and practice thinking aloud. These strategies improved their independence and metacognitive skills.

These scaffolds were helpful for ELLs because they were allowed to read on grade level with peers, and were afforded the opportunity to activate prior knowledge, which is an important practice for ELLs. Therefore, the author argued that, “guided reading for ELLs is a useful tool because student needs (including reading ability and second language development) should inform instruction” (p. 2). Guided reading allows teachers to tailor instruction to meet the diverse needs of each student, especially ELL students.

Overall, these articles emphasized that by incorporating guided reading, with a great deal of vocabulary work, modeling, and open-ended questioning, ELLs will be more willing to engage in peer and teacher interaction, as well as transform into reading learners. These opportunities are enhanced especially when teachers promoted a teaching approach sensitive to language learners in small groups, which Yoon (as cited in Stinnett,

2009), Marinaccio-Eckel (n.d.), and Purdy (2008) had observed during their studies and interviews.

*Guided reading and struggling and at-risk students.* Gabl, Kaiser, Long, and Roemer's (2007) study focused on the multiple needs for student achievement in terms of reading fluency and comprehension. These needs included family involvement, positive classroom environment, and meaningful reading curriculum. The reading curriculum was taught using guided reading. The subjects of this study included 50 second grade students and 50 fourth grade students. These students were spread out over two different sites and received guided reading instruction in a 16-week span. Through prior testing, these researchers determined these groups of students performed low on grade level reading tasks related to comprehension and fluency. While the students used in the study were described as having very low reading levels for their grade level, they were not labeled "at-risk" during this particular study. However, due to the definition of "at-risk" and the purposes of this review, they will be considered as such.

These teachers focused on flexible grouping with leveled texts, and they found that the students' confidence increased due to receiving reading materials that were assigned according to their ability. These researchers also used graphic organizers in their lessons as an optional strategy for making meaning. Teachers provided consistent and systematic support to assist each group as needed. The researchers used district provided materials and assessments (pre and post) for grouping and testing. Overall, the results of the study showed that the second and fourth grade students increased reading fluency and comprehension within four months of the intervention. The researchers attributed the improvements to the guided reading program and use of leveled texts in a small group.

Students also made gains in their use of reading strategies and story understanding when using graphic organizers on a consistent basis.

Short, Kane, and Peeling (2000) conducted a study on third-grade students who were at-risk of failing academically. It was determined that students reading below grade-level would receive a guided reading intervention. Rigby and Wright books were the core reading materials used with the guided reading groups. Teachers also used the leveling method set by Fountas and Pinnell. The components of guided reading included rereading familiar text, which was thought to promote the development of automatic reading, fluency, and expression. Another component, shared reading, consists of the teacher reading aloud and pointing to words (typically in big books) repetitively, so students can read/follow along. Shared reading and guided reading prompted students to construct meaning, make predictions, reread, segment and blend phonemes, and chunk and decode words.

The results showed that all students in the program made substantial progress in reading. It was concluded that this progress was made when the teacher used a consistent routine, supported reading strategies, and encouraged students to self-monitor while reading. Short et al. (2000) suggested that guided reading worked because it is a method that facilitates teaching to the student's (or group's) needs in reading. Also, through anecdotal notes, Short et al. noticed when consistent instruction and continuous support of various strategies were used, students began to gain confidence in their reading. Guided reading instruction was conducted throughout the year. In September of that school year, only 77% of students were reading primer and level one passages with less than 90% accuracy. By May, 100% of students could read the passages, and 72% were

reading level five passages. In a matter of months, all students were reading, and the majority of students gained four levels. These reading gains were exciting for the teachers considering where students began just months beforehand.

*Guided Reading and Adults.* Massengill (2004) conducted research with four adults as subjects with guided reading instruction. However, in this study she use guided reading instruction one-to-one with each of her subjects. While two of the subjects were not officially labeled Learning Disabled, she stated that one subject “showed little emotional involvement or eye contact. He was on medication that made him seem lethargic” (p. 593). She suggested that another subject “most likely possesses a learning disability coupled with a hearing loss” (p. 594). Massengill’s study included two other adults. Neither were believed to have a Learning Disability.

Massengill (2004) conducted instruction using the same components of familiar reread, word work, and a new read, for all the subjects including two particular subjects most likely being Learning Disabled and/or “at-risk.” She focused on word recognition strategies and letter sounds. The reading levels of these adult subjects ranged from first grade to sixth grade. Each subject met with Massengill for 32 sessions, which lasted an hour each. Reading materials included books, the Bible, recipes, bills, and *Reader’s Digest*. All adults struggled greatly with word recognition, which was the main focus for each guided reading session. Making meaning of the text was another important focus for guided reading sessions.

With daily testing with the use of various literacy assessments, and graphing of results for each subject, all four learners increased their reading ability. Massengill (2004) stated, “the amount of participant growth indicated here shows guided reading, a

meaning-making instructional framework, corresponds with expected gains when reading is viewed as meaning making” (p. 599).

Participants increased their grade level in reading from 1.5 grade levels (some gained one and a half grade levels) up to 3 grade levels (a subject gained three grade levels). Using the 1987 Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (word attack subtest), results in word recognition indicated that, “each participant showed an increase in decoding and structural analysis” (p. 596). With the 1990 Slosson Oral Reading Test, results indicated that, “all four learners increased in their overall reading levels, and their gains may be compared to a standard (adults make on average about one year’s gain in 20 hours of instruction)” (p. 599). After the instruction period was over, these readers were re-assessed after a period of time and three out of the four maintained strong word recognition and meaning-making ability. The results of this study supports the constructivist theory by demonstrating that learning gains are made when the learning is authentic and meaningful.

Massengill’s (2004) study demonstrated the strength of the guided reading framework for increasing reading ability in adults, and possibly those with Learning Disabilities. Learners’ knowledge and ability to apply word recognition behaviors, such as decoding, structural analysis, and sight word reading improved. Guided reading’s flexible framework was credited for the subjects’ reading improvement.

### *Synthesis*

The findings of these research articles indicated that guided reading instruction works for many levels of readers and abilities. For ELL students, researchers Avalos et al. (2007), Purdy (2008), and Yoon (2007) determined that reading gains were made



when guided reading or modified guided reading was used. When ELL students have regular, explicit opportunities to participate and closely observe the modeling of other learning styles in small groups, strategies are better understood (Avalos et al 2007; Purdy 2008; Yoon, 2007). Modeling is especially important when learning comprehension, letter-sound connections, questioning, and interaction with multiple texts (Avalos et al., 2007; Purdy 2008). When learning is conducted in a small group for a longer period of time than the average guided reading time, reading levels increase for ELL students (Avalos et al., 2007). In small groups, ELL students are able to work with words, sounds, and language more often in order to enhance their reading skills, and to make learning meaningful (Purdy, 2008).

It is important to note that guided reading instruction for ELL students was modified to meet for long periods of time and for more days compared to a typical guided reading schedule. Although, ELL students had the disadvantage of reading text and responding in a language other than their first language, they were still able to make gains in reading (Avalos et al., 2007). Research also emphasized the importance of a supportive and sensitive teaching approach, such as guided reading, for ELL success in reading (Purdy 2008; Yoon, 2007; Marinaccio-Eckel, n.d.).

Students who are labeled “at-risk” or struggling can also benefit from guided reading (Gabl et al., 2007; Short et al., 2000). Researchers determined that guided reading with these students encouraged self-monitoring while reading, provided routine and support of reading strategies, which led to gains in reading levels and confidence within four to nine months (under one school year’s time) (Gabl et al., 2007; Short et al., 2000). Also, students were able to maintain strong word recognition and meaning-making ability

when instructed with guided reading. Due to guided reading's flexible framework, teachers were able to follow the Interactive Model and constructivist theory by revisiting reading strategies and restructuring the focus of the groups. This was done as often as needed to meet the specific needs of students to obtain reading growth (Gabl et al., 2007; Massengill, 2004; Short et al., 2000).

Students as young as 8 years old were subjects in these research articles, and all improved their reading ability at least one grade level with guided reading instruction. These results indicate that guided reading instruction is a strong reading program for students with low reading ability from early elementary through adulthood.

In conclusion, students being instructed in guided reading should be taught according to their reading needs. Guided reading sessions should include leveled text (for familiar read and new read), word work, questioning, and a writing activity. With these components, students are connecting with the text and responding to the text to create comprehension. They are also using the text to reinforce what they learned to increase fluency and word recognition. Modifications, such as more frequent and longer periods of time than the average guided reading format for sessions, are encouraged for ELL students and Special Education students.

Guided reading is being used in multiple countries and positive results from this program are found worldwide (Chaava & Ghosp, 2010; Fisher, 2008; Whitehead, 2002). The research reviewed in this piece determined that guided reading improves reading ability, specifically fluency and comprehension. With such positive results it is not surprising that the approach is a popular choice for reading instruction. As long as research continues to prove its positive effects, guided reading will remain a popular

choice. It has the support of many researchers, such as the authors mentioned in this review, and theorists such as Cambourne. This approach encourages multiple knowledges, as described in Rumelhart's Interactive Model. Also, teachers who use guided reading support its goals and use. All of these, researchers, theorists, and teachers, are important considerations when choosing an effective reading program to be used with many abilities and ages.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

As a new teacher and future reading specialist, I believe it is important to know what my district uses in terms of reading instruction. While guided reading has been proven to be widely successful (Avalos et al., 2007; Gabl et al., 2007; Short, Kane & Peeling, 2000), it is imperative to continue researching a wide variety of reading instruction programs. Therefore, with the help of past research, and continued research efforts such as my own, information can be passed on to either make changes in curriculum, or solidify and strengthen its current use.

#### *Study Context*

I began collecting qualitative research through a survey at my elementary school and district of only eight months. This school's total enrollment is 474. Males make up 50.4% of the total enrollment while females make up 49.6% of the enrollment. The school has 0.4% American Indian students, 0.2% Asian, 1.7% Black, 16.9% Hispanic, and 80.2% White. Currently, 10.1% students have disabilities and 31.4% are eligible for free and reduced programs, 9.5% speak Spanish. It is located in southeastern Wisconsin. The district includes one elementary, one middle, and one high school. There are 1,236 students in the district. This district was chosen because it represents a small district in a rural area and was good size to gain an elementary sample.

#### *Participants*

The teaching staff consisted of two 4K teachers, four 5K, four 1<sup>st</sup> grade, five 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, four 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, three 4th grade, a reading teacher, two ELL teachers, two special educators, and three specialists (art, physical education, and music). The special

education teachers were not solicited for participation because one did not have a consistent schedule of reading instruction with students, and one was on maternity leave. Specialist teachers were not included in the survey because they do not instruct a reading block in their classes.

### *Survey Distribution*

With permission of the principal, I distributed paper copies of the survey through the 25 teachers' mailboxes (including general education teachers 4K-4<sup>th</sup> grade), ELL teachers, and reading teacher. I included a letter explaining the purpose and importance of their participation in the survey. Teachers were to return completed surveys to me via my mailbox. Some teachers returned the surveys with the envelopes originally distributed to them with their names on it. Therefore, I knew which teacher some of the surveys came from. Teachers were given the month of April to participate in the survey, which was completely optional.

### *Guided Reading Survey*

I developed the items in the survey based on information reported in the review of literature and my own experience with guided reading. I also based the items off of my curiosity about guided reading attitudes and guided reading's use in our school. No particular reading approach was declared as the sole approach in our school as far as I knew, so I wanted to know how many teachers were using guided reading or a different reading instruction approach.

I surveyed the teachers on their guided reading use and overall thoughts of guided reading. This determined if guided reading was being used and if so, how the teachers used it (large group, small groups, one-to-one). Also, if teachers were not using guided

reading, I wanted to know what they used for reading instruction.

The survey (see Appendix A), included nine total items focused on guided reading, with room for teacher comments for each item, if desired. Four of the items included choices for answers including: a yes/no, a scale of 1-5 indicating strength of knowledge, possible resource options such as people or print options, and group size indications of large, small, or one-to-one. Four items were short, written response items indicating how often guided reading occurs in the class, years of experience with guided reading, grade levels teachers used guided reading, and the class make up including ELL, Special Education students, and Gifted/Talented. The final item was completely open, asking for personal thoughts regarding guided reading.

I administered the survey in April 2012 to provide important information in a timely manner. There were 25 surveys distributed to 25 teachers of the elementary school. The survey items were selected with care, but kept short as time is precious, and I wanted to create room for comments to encourage expanded responses.

The survey, found in Appendix A, contained items 3, 6, 8, and 9, which were chosen, based on my experiences. I wanted to know if teachers were using guided reading, and, if not, what they were using instead. I wanted to know how they learned about guided reading because there are numerous ways to acquire knowledge. If they learned their information from a reading teacher, they most likely did not come to it on their own, whereas if they learned it from a teacher in another district, online, or print sources, they most likely taught themselves about guided reading.

Items 6 and 8 were of interest to me because of my experience with teacher turnover, which included teachers switching grade levels or switching schools. I also

wanted to know how long the teachers in this district had been using it to determine if guided reading was a fairly new concept within the district or if everyone seemed settled with it. If it was a new concept, then an in-service may be needed.

Items 4, 5, and 7 were chosen based on the research read about guided reading success with English Language Learners (ELL) students and Special Education students (Avalos, et al., 2007; Marinaccio-Eckel, n.d.; Massengill, 2004; Short et al., 2000). Items 4 and 5 were chosen based on the readings of guided reading structure (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Instructional Strategies Online, n.d.). These items told me what kind of structure they use when teaching guided reading, and if they followed the traditional formats, or modified it.

Item 2 was chosen based on the idea of cognitive clarity, which is applicable to teachers and students. Cognitive clarity is:

Knowing what you are trying to do and understanding where you are trying to go and why you are going there. When you have cognitive clarity, you are more likely to persist in your efforts because you anticipate the goals you will eventually reach (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002, p. 88).

Therefore, I wanted to know how cognitively clear teachers were about teaching guided reading because if they were not clear, then students most likely were not clear about what they were learning. Item 4 was chosen based on the constructivist theory, which emphasized that meanings are socially constructed (Cambourne, 2002, p. 29). I wanted to know if teachers are using guided reading in a socially constructed manner in order to make meaning of the material being instructed.

### *Survey Analysis*

I analyzed each survey by tallying the responses, and then computing the percentage to gain a snapshot of where the teachers in this particular district at the elementary level stood with guided reading. As for comments and written response items, I compiled the overall responses into sections, and marked each survey with a number code to refer to later. Thus, I was able to conclude the overall experiences, pros, and cons to guided reading according to teachers who use it. Results from the survey are presented in Chapter Four.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Results**

This chapter describes the results of the survey. Results are organized by item. The description of each item, in addition to the answer to each item is provided. At the end of each survey result, a mini-analysis is provided for that item, with full analysis at the end of all items.

All of the teachers who responded to the survey indicated that they use guided reading with their students. None of the responses mentioned any other reading approach used instead of guided reading. The overall comments were positive for guided reading when it came to effectiveness for students. Teachers commented on the ease to determine how to help students when using guided reading. The most negative comment written indicated that guided reading takes a tremendous amount of planning. Three teachers specifically wrote about planning at home, on the weekends, and other times outside of allotted planning time.

There were 14 out of 25 teachers, including general educators 4K-4<sup>th</sup> grades, an ELL teacher, and the reading teacher, who completed this survey. The response rate was 56%, with teacher participation. When asked if they use guided reading in item one, all 14 indicated ‘yes’, therefore, 100% of the participating teachers indeed use guided reading. One teacher commented that it is part of balanced reading instruction, and another teacher commented that it is used in addition to direct reading instruction.

Item two asked teachers to rate, on a scale from 1-5 (1 being low, 5 being strong), the strength of their knowledge about guided reading. Out of the 14 respondents, 2 (14%) indicated that they know a ‘fair’ amount about guided reading; 6 (43%) indicated that

they know a ‘moderate’ amount about guided reading; and 1 (7%) reported between ‘moderate’ and ‘strong’. Five teachers (36%) indicated that they know a ‘strong’ amount about guided reading. Therefore, the results showed that over half of the teachers believe that they know at least a ‘moderate’ amount of guided reading information.

Item three asked for participants to circle their sources of knowledge about guided reading. The possible choices were ‘print resources’, ‘principals’, ‘reading teacher’, ‘teacher within the district’, ‘teacher in another district’, and ‘Internet,’ with a space provided for participants to write in ‘other’. Teachers were asked to choose as many as possible. There were a total of 44 tallies for this item; each teacher marked more than one source. The principal was a source for guided reading knowledge for 1 participant. Six out of 44 (14%) indicated they received information from a teacher from another district. Seven (16%) sought information on the internet; 7 (16%) obtained information from another teacher in the same district; 11 (25%) reported using the reading teacher as a source of information for their guided reading knowledge; and 12 (27%) reported accessing print resources (magazines, journals, books, etc.). Therefore, this survey showed that when it came to learning how to teach with the guided reading approach, print sources and the reading teacher were the main sources of knowledge. Learning about guided reading from teachers within the district, teachers in a different district, and the Internet hovered in the middle as the source of knowledge. The principal was least indicated as a source of knowledge for learning about the guided reading approach.

Item four asked how teachers grouped students when using guided reading. There were three choices: large group, small group, and one-to-one. Teachers were asked to circle all that applied to them when teaching guided reading. The results indicated that

most teachers use more than one method for grouping when using guided reading, as 24 responses were reported for this item. Only the ELL teacher indicated sole use of one-to-one method with her students for guided reading. Out of 24 tallies, 4 (17%) respondents indicated that they use large group instruction in their guided reading. Seven (29%) reported use of a one-to-one method when teaching with guided reading, and 14 (58%) indicated that they use small groups when using guided reading. While most teachers use multiple grouping options when teaching guided reading lessons, the majority (over half) use small groups for some of the time. Findings indicated teachers were least likely to use a large group format for teaching guided reading.

Item five asked teachers to indicate how often they conduct guided reading. This was an open answer question. However, an example answer was given to ensure a cohesive format in responses. Not all teachers responded to this question. Out of the total 14 respondents, only 11 responded to this item. In terms of frequency, the majority, 8 out of 11 (73%) reported that they teach guided reading everyday (i.e. five days out of the week). According to their written responses, 3 (27%) indicated that they teach guided reading four days of the week. Teachers met with at least three groups per day, and at least four days a week.

Item six inquired about the amount of years teachers have used guided reading in their teaching. This was a written response, and 11 out of the 14 teachers responded. Out of the 11 teachers, 1 (9%) indicated guided reading was used for 1.5 years; 3 (27%) teachers reported guided reading use for 2 years; 2 (18%) experienced guided reading instruction for 3 years; and 3 (27%) participants have used this approach for 4 years. One participant reported 5 years of guided reading use, and another participant reported 6

years of experience with this approach. Therefore, the average teaching experience with guided reading was 3.3 years. I compared the number of years of experience teachers had teaching guided reading with the strength of knowledge teachers indicated about guided reading (from item two). This comparison led to the mode of knowledge strength for teachers about guided reading as 'moderate'. This indicates that on average, teachers in this school have cognitive clarity about teaching guided reading.

Nine out of the 11 teachers who responded to item seven indicated that they have students who are ELL. Five have Special Education students and five have students who are Gifted and Talented. Teachers also indicated that they use one-to-one instruction for guided reading. A teacher of students in the inclusion classroom used a very small group of 1-2 students, or one-to-one when using guided reading. However, most other teachers prefer to have a small group even when they have Special Education, ELL, or are Gifted and Talented. One teacher noted that the Special Education students in her class have speech needs, so it works fine to have them in a small group. Teachers who use one-to-one instruction for guided reading also have Special Education students, ELL, and Gifted and Talented. It is possible that they use one-to-one guided reading instruction specifically with those students, but this finding was inconclusive and more information is needed.

Item eight asked teachers to write a response to the grade levels they have used guided reading with. I noted that many teachers, although with not too many years of guided reading experience, have taught guided reading in more than one grade level. Three out of the 11 (27%) indicated they have experience teaching guided reading in kindergarten; 6 (55%) have used guided reading in first grade; 4 (36%) in second grade; 5

(45%) in third grade; and 5 (45%) reported using guided reading in fourth grade. First grade was the most prevalent grade level for guided reading instruction. Least prevalent was kindergarten.

Item nine was an open written response item that asked teachers to comment on guided reading. There were 11 respondents to this item. Ten comments were categorized as positive and 3 as negative. Positive comments about guided reading indicated teachers felt the approach was an “effective teaching” method that helped keep track of student progress. Respondents also indicated they felt this approach “improves reading levels” and that kids respond well to it. Negative comments about guided reading indicated that teachers feel “planning is time consuming.” Also, teachers reported lessons are “interrupted by students” who are off-task. Based on the comments about guided reading, this approach is perceived, academically, as good for students. Planning takes a lot of time and students outside the group are off task at times, which impacts the effect a teacher has on the learning of the group and the group’s ability to learn.

In summary, participants taught guided reading for an average of three years. The majority of teachers know a moderate amount about this approach and gained this knowledge predominately from the reading teacher and print sources. Teachers mostly conduct their guided reading lessons in small groups that meet everyday, but at times also conduct lessons in large groups or one-to-one. Teachers who indicated they use one-to-one grouping for guided reading also had students in their classes who were ELLs, Special Education students or Gifted and Talented. Many participants have used guided reading in more than one grade. Overall, teachers like guided reading because they think it is good for students, shows and tracks progress, and is an effective form of teaching. A

few teachers are also concerned that it takes too much time to plan and students outside of the guided reading instruction group are often off-task and interrupt the teacher's teaching.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Changes and Recommendations**

In this chapter, I discuss findings from my survey in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. This chapter also describes the changes needed if this survey were to be repeated at the same school, or any other school. It outlines which changes would be made to certain items, in addition to a change in the process of distributing surveys in hopes for greater participation. Recommendations are made for future research of guided reading and the school district based on the results of the survey.

#### *Findings Connected to the Reviewed Literature*

The findings of this survey relate to the previously reviewed literature in many ways. The conclusion that teachers know a moderate amount of information about teaching guided reading indicates that they have cognitive clarity. This was a teaching principle of Cunningham and Cunningham (2002). Teachers indicated that their main source of information when learning about guided reading was a person, which is supported by the constructivist theory that meanings are constructed socially (Cambourne, 2002).

Teachers reported using a mix of groups (small, large, one-to-one) when instructing guided reading, which supports the findings of Bond and Dykstra (1967) with their conclusion that teaching with multiple reading approaches are best, no one approach is more superior over the other. Teachers' use of small groups conducted mostly every day follows the ideal format of guided reading instruction by Fountas and Pinnell (1996). Also, first grade was found to be the most prevalent grade for guided reading instruction, which may have been influenced by Marie Clay's Reading Recovery (1984 as cited in

Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) method because Clay's program strictly works with struggling first graders. Furthermore, teachers use of guided reading with all students including ELLs and Special Education/at-risk students is supported by the research and theories of Avalos et al. (2007), Clay (1984 as cited in Fountas & Pinnel), Gabl et al. (2007), Marrinacio-Eckel (n.d), Massengill (2004), Purdy (2008), Short (2000), Stinnett (2009), and Yoon (2007).

Short et al.'s (2000) study of third grade students demonstrated that students advanced their reading levels during a year of guided reading instruction. As the impact from guided reading has been previously demonstrated, it was not surprising that the teachers in this study had adopted a guided reading approach in their instruction. While the findings from the present study were overwhelmingly positive, there are several changes I would recommend for future investigations of this approach.

### *Changes*

I would make subtle changes to the wording and response options for a few items in the survey. I would also add options for responses to gain more participation and information from the survey. I would specify item seven, which asks about the make-up of the teacher's caseload/class. I would specifically ask teachers to indicate how guided reading is instructed with each type of student: ELL, Special Education, and Gifted and Talented. Avalos et al.'s (2007) research with ELLs showed effective learning with modified guided reading, which included longer sessions, and meeting more frequently. Massengill's (2004) use of one-to-one instruction suggested there is potential for this small grouping to advance reading levels with Special Education/at-risk students.

For item three, I would ask teachers to only choose the primary source of



information. For item four, I would ask teachers to rank their use of large group, small group, or one-to-one approaches. In item five, teachers should indicate their average group sizes when describing how often their groups meet. This information will better determine alignment with recommendations from Fountas and Pinnell (1996) and Saskatoon Public Schools (2009), in terms of the frequency and extent of time guided reading is implemented. In item two, I would ask teachers to write which reading approaches they have used instead of guided reading. In item nine, I would ask teachers to note overall, in comparison to other reading approaches used, which they believe is more effective for all students.

In order to possibly promote more participation, I would offer the paper surveys through teacher mailboxes as before, in addition to an online survey option such as [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). For paper surveys, I would not put the pages back to back to decrease the number of incomplete surveys.

### *Recommendations*

Reflecting on the entire process, I make recommendations based on my findings. Recommendations are provided for researchers, including myself, who may wish to repeat and expand this survey. There are also recommendations for administrators of my current school. These recommendations are intended for in-service programs and scheduling during the school day. Finally, I have recommendations for teachers within the school regarding kid stations and the importance of sharing resources.

For administrators, I recommend in-services that are led by the reading teacher since she is a main source of information regarding reading instruction for the school. Another knowledgeable person in guided reading, such as a consultant, might also be

considered. In-service topics should focus on the effective use of modified guided reading for ELLs based on the research of Avalos et al. (2007). Based on the information from the survey, 82% of elementary classrooms have ELL students. It is my recommendation that information and demonstrations of effective reading instruction be designed specifically for ELLs. I also recommend a focus on the benefits of one-to-one instruction for at-risk and Special Education students, based on the research from Massengill (2004). In addition, due to the large number of new teachers with relatively few years of experience using guided reading, a review of the different ways to group students, and the guided reading format based on Fountas and Pinnell (1996) should also be considered.

According to the survey results, teachers believe guided reading is effective and good for kids. Unfortunately, there is a tremendous amount of planning time needed in order to receive those results. Teachers have indicated that they spent large amounts of time planning after school hours and on weekends. I recommend to administrators that extra planning time be allotted for teachers. This can be done when considering the schedule of the school day (i.e. incorporating a block schedule, or adjusting the start and end times of the school day). Allowing teachers professional development time to plan is another option.

It is further recommended that information from this survey and the reviewed research about guided reading be strongly considered when creating curriculum. I recommend that the curriculum team declare the guided reading approach as the official reading approach for teachers in our district. Information regarding its flexible use for students from kindergarten to adulthood, as well as its effective results for regular

education students, ELL students, and Special Education students makes it a strong candidate for the recommended reading approach. While according to the survey, more than half of the teachers already use guided reading, our district currently does not have a specified curriculum for reading. If administrators declare guided reading as the district's reading approach for elementary students, then the curriculum team can begin aligning standards and setting district goals. It is recommended that the curriculum team make general recommendations for which standards to target during guided reading instruction. These actions from the team will strengthen curriculum between grade levels, and begin closing gaps in the area of reading.

For teachers, it is recommended that resources, plans, and ideas be regularly shared within a grade level and across the school. For example, during a common planning time or staff meeting, teachers can take turns explaining what their kid stations (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2009) look like and why they think they are effective. Therefore, other teachers can gain ideas from other teachers, or simply use the same materials borrowed from the teacher who introduced it. It is possible that this action would reduce the teacher planning time required with the guided reading approach. Also, it is recommended that teachers share resources in an online file that all teachers in the school can access. If a teacher reads an interesting article or wants to conduct quick research within the school, they can upload it to the school's online file without clogging the entire staff's mailbox. By submitting ideas and resources, all teachers in the school can have greater cognitive clarity about the guided reading format and kid stations, which may strengthen their knowledge about the approach from 'moderate' to 'strong'.

Based on the survey results, people (teachers within district, out of district,

reading teacher, and principal) accounted for 57% of the guided reading knowledge source. Print resources were 27%, and the Internet accounted for 16% of the guided reading knowledge source. With an online file that teachers can post and share quickly and easily, teachers will have access to information from people sources, print sources (i.e. article from magazine), and Internet sources such as informational websites that may have been missed when initially learning about guided reading.

For those interested in conducting the same research, I would recommend revising the survey items previously mentioned in the ‘changes’ section. I would re-send the survey to the district using a paper or electronic survey option. I would also send reminders with the survey closing date, and emphasizing the importance of participation. Furthermore, I recommend repeating the process with a variety of other elementary schools including a larger district within a fairly rural setting. This is important to maintain the same setting, but increase the sample size. Other studies could be conducted in larger districts in an urban setting with a similar-sized school. It would be most informational if after the results within the surrounding area were compiled, that similar-sized schools in other states or even other countries participated in the survey. Also, I recommend continued collection of information from this survey and future similar surveys to compare. More expansive research, with wider participation, will provide more reliable information about the extent to which teachers use guided reading and their perspectives about this approach.

I believe it is important to remain knowledgeable about current reading research whether for or against guided reading. It is also important to keep in mind the history of reading patterns and discussions of guided reading versus basal reading instruction.

Applying this knowledge, teachers have a better chance of enhancing students' reading skills. While there will never be a full agreement on one approach over another, research-based instruction should influence the direction of the teaching approach. The findings from my survey and the literature reviewed, points to guided reading as an approach that works for all students.

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## Appendix A

### Investigation of Guided Reading in Elementary School Survey

Do you use Guided Reading in your class? YES NO

Comments:

If no, please describe what you use for reading instruction (i.e. basal)

On a scale of 1-5, rate your knowledge about Guided Reading (circle one):

1	2	3	4	5
minimal	somewhat	fair	moderate	strong

Comments:

How did you learn about teaching with Guided Reading (circle all that apply):

print resources (books, journals, etc) principal reading teacher

teacher in your district teacher in another district internet resources

Other:

How do you instruct Guided Reading? (circle all that apply)

large group small group one-to-one

Comments:

How often do you instruct using Guided Reading?

*For example: I use Guided Reading twice a day, four days per week.*

How long (years, months) have you been using Guided Reading?

What is the make-up of your class:

\_\_\_\_\_boys    \_\_\_\_\_girls    \_\_\_\_\_ ELL    \_\_\_\_\_Special Needs    \_\_\_\_\_Gifted/Talented

With what age(s)/grade(s) have you used Guided Reading?

Please briefly explain your thoughts on Guided Reading (positive or negative).

*Note: Your answers are confidential*